

## SUMMARIES OF GROUP DISCUSSION

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### **Theme I: Rural Transformation and Inclusive Development**

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#### I

#### INTRODUCTION

This theme was intended to attend to various aspects of the larger issue of rural transformation (RT) and its implications for inclusive development and the changing dynamics of the very process of RT itself due to various external factors. Papers were invited on various aspects of RT like livelihood diversification and increasing importance of non-farm sources of income; changing dynamics of rural labour market; changing livelihood strategies and interventions as pathways to rural/agrarian transformation at the village/household level; micro/village level studies on the process of livelihoods increasingly becoming de-linked from farming; diversification of agriculture; drivers of RT including the role of migration; role of different rural development programs and policies like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), and National Food Security Act (NFSA) -based Public Distribution System (PDS) in facilitating the ongoing process of RT; comparative analysis and assessment of the ongoing process of RT in India vis-à-vis RT in other developing economies in Asia and Africa; role of community institutions/organisations like Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Cooperatives, Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs), Panchayats and Non-Government/Civil Society Organisations (NGOs/CSOs) in RT; nature and extent of participation of marginalised community households; and the effect of ongoing RT at the national/regional/state/district levels, and impact of rural development as measured by quantitative indicators, including implications for attaining Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Under the theme, 145 submissions were accepted including 14 papers in full length for their publication in the conference number of the IJAE. 44 papers, including 9 full-length papers, were presented at the conference. This report gives a summary of the presented papers in a thematic manner and brings out issues for research from presentations and discussions among the participants at the conference.

Two papers on Green House Gas (GHG) emissions in rice and in meat sectors highlighted the issues in this domain wherein the analysis was across major producing countries, including India. The farmers' perception of climate change was also discussed with field data from Maharashtra wherein the role of climate resilient

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technology was explored. Similarly, farmers' willingness to pay for eco-friendly technology was discussed in the context of Haryana.

Technology issues were discussed in the form of digital technology in grapes and resource conservation technology (RCT) in the livestock sector in the specific state contexts of Maharashtra, Punjab and Haryana, respectively. Further, the adoption of High-Density Planting System (HDPS) in apple in hill regions of Himachal Pradesh was examined vis-a-vis non-adopters, and it was found that though it led to higher yield, the costly nature of the new production system was challenging for small farmers to adopt due to lack of resources or access to credit for the same. The issue of crop specialization versus crop diversification at the state level was also examined, and it revealed interesting patterns of the two practices for various crops across states.

The vexed policy issue of groundwater-based irrigation leading to groundwater depletion and distorting cropping patterns, and the role of power pricing policy for irrigation, was examined in terms of tiered pricing in the context of one state, and the welfare trade-off of such a subsidy across different categories of farmers in India. It was suggested that only a certain category of farmers be subsidised for power for irrigation.

An examination of distress sale by farmers defined in terms of sale below Minimum Support Price (MSP) in wheat highlighted the policy relevance of MSP and issues therein for farmers in terms of welfare implications, which generated many questions on the conceptual and methodological aspects of the study, which was based on NSO 2018-19 data.

From the risk management perspective, a study of the electronic- National Agricultural Market (e-NAM) revealed that selling in e-NAM was better for farmers in terms of higher price realization but there were issues in its performance. A study of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) examined production risk management under this scheme and farmers' perceptions of it.

The state-specific papers on vulnerability and sustainability in terms of production and livelihoods risk highlighted the issues therein. The context of these studies ranged from central Indian states, agriculturally developed states, to those of the north-east region.

The focus on micro and village studies was missing in the discussions, as there were not many papers on this dimension, other than the keynote paper, which had reviewed many village studies. The only other village study explored the changes over a long period of time in a village in Central Gujarat. Another paper examined the changes at the block/cluster level in the context of Madhya Pradesh.

## RESEARCH AND POLICY ISSUES

Though the presented papers covered many domains as discussed above, there are many areas of enquiry in the domain of RT which need the attention of researchers to inform policy and public action. These include the following:

The horticultural sector, which is growing in importance like the livestock sector, both in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contribution as well as in export and consumption, demands an understanding of the changing dynamics of horticultural crops as they are high-value and more profitable compared with cereal crops and other foodgrain crops. The value chains of the horticultural crops need to be examined to understand how the dynamics of the value chains influence the processes of rural social and economic transformation.

The focus on village studies has been largely missing in the last few decades. But, village and cluster level studies are crucial to capture local level dynamics of RT so that appropriate policies and actions can be designed to implement public policy programs at the local level to minimise their negative externalities and maximise positive externalities.

Given that agriculture is more commercialised now and the global markets will make it even more commercialised, the farm and allied sector inputs are an important dimension of RT as they have implications for employment and livelihoods e.g. weedicides as growing markets in India. The only paper on the role of credit in rural non-farm sector development analysed the role of the state in terms of credit policy across India, Brazil and Mexico.

Even crop specific studies need attention from the RT perspective as some new crops can change the dynamics of production and market due to their new requirements of markets and market linkages which can bring new players in the sector or the value chain e.g. processors, exporters and supermarkets. Even crop specific innovations need to be studied for their impact on RT and its implications (Singh, 2017).

The producer collectives are being seen as major vehicles for agricultural and RT and there is plenty of policy thrust on this mechanism. However, adequate research interest has not been seen in this domain. The transactional as well as transformative role of such collectives and constraints to such role should be identified with rigorous research given the policy thrust on these entities and varied contexts of such interventions.

The role of markets in RT was also inadequately discussed. The changing markets for agricultural and rural produce in terms of new channels need urgent attention to see if they can facilitate RT. More importantly, the role of markets needs to be examined in the context of existing caste, gender and other inequalities in the rural sector.

These and other issues of research highlighted in the keynote paper for this theme need to be researched with primary data and in specific meso and micro contexts. The three themes of the conference i.e. rural transformation, commons and their governance, and trade and sustainability, all of which have implications for sustainability of the rural sector need to be examined in an integrated fashion and need thinking beyond agricultural economics.

#### REFERENCES

Singh, S (2017). Institutional Innovations in Paddy Rice Production and Marketing in India: Experience and Strategies in Samarendu Mohanty et al (eds.): *The Future Rice Strategy for India*, Academic Press (Elsevier), London, 335-357 (Chapter 12).